



Information disconnect: Grey literature & disaster response

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Question: What information resources do disaster/emergency response professionals turn to when a disaster strikes?

Objective: To outline the challenges experienced by humanitarian & disaster response personnel when using grey literature.

Methods: 2008-2009 12 interviews w/military & government structured, open-ended interviews;
Investigated their information use & challenges;
Card sort methodology to identify common themes.

Information needed depends on: deployment role; type needed; when; nature of disaster; technology limitation & availability;

Grey literature challenges

Many variables impact the what & how

- Many different sources of grey lit used
- Lack of indexing
- Not included in a “database” that is searchable
- Difficult to search for online
- Ephemeral nature
- Knowledge of pre-existing resource
- Reliance on your personal network

“[find it] by calling the organization [but]...first you have to know it exists”



What we learned

- Grey lit is heavily used by responders before, during & after deployment
- Many different sources and types of information are used
- Difficult to find & obtain
- Centralized access to pre-selected resources is desirable & in a variety of formats
- **Role for libraries** – find, collect, digitize, organize

“It only exists if you know where to find it”

